



## long-tailed weasel

*Mustela frenata*

Kingdom: Animalia  
Division/Phylum: Chordata - vertebrates  
Class: Mammalia  
Order: Carnivora  
Family: Mustelidae

### Features

The long-tailed weasel is 13 to 18 inches long, including a four- to six-inch black-tipped tail. The red-brown body has an orange or white belly. Some long-tailed weasels become white in the winter except for their black tail tip.

### Natural History

The long-tailed weasel lives in brushy areas, open woods, grasslands, roadsides, and farm buildings – anywhere near water. It eats birds, lizards, small mammals, and snakes. It climbs trees readily and is mainly active at night (nocturnal). It hides in the burrows of other small mammals, crevices, or brush piles. Mating occurs in the summer. After mating, the fertilized eggs undergo a period of time in which they do not implant in the uterus or develop much. Therefore, the gestation period is very long, nearly nine months. Young are born in April. A litter may contain up to nine young. Young are helpless at birth and their eyes do not open for over a month. Males attain sexual maturity in their first year, but females do not mature until their second year.

### Habitats

Mississippi River; Missouri River; bottomland forests; interior rivers and streams; constructed lakes, ponds, and reservoirs; natural lakes and prairie marshes; wet prairies and fens

### Iowa Status

uncommon, native

### Iowa Range

statewide

### Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.  
*Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.